

17 June 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. William Bundy
Special Assistant to the DD/I

THROUGH: Deputy Assistant Director for Operations *gk*

SUBJECT: Proposed Legislation for Restricting
Dissemination of Communist Propaganda

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1. This Division concurs generally in the comments made by [redacted] Acting Assistant Director, Collection and Dissemination, in his memorandum to the General Counsel dated 8 June 1954, which applies specifically to H.R. 9317. The following additional comments, which also cover H.R. 9244, may be worth considering:

(a) H.R. 9244 is limited to "Communist mail" and would require denial or revocation of second class mailing privileges for such material, and forbid its mailing as first, third, or fourth class mail unless it is conspicuously stamped "Communist Propaganda". Its definition of "Communist mail" could be interpreted to include much of the factual or propaganda material in which CIA is interested.

(b) H.R. 9317 is much broader, applying to any mail which contains "material advocating political or other doctrines contrary to the best interests of the US," and prohibiting the handling of such material under any less-than-cost class of mail. The definition of prohibited material is tied to the Attorney General's list and other standard guides to subversive groups and publications, and again it might be interpreted to include much material of interest to CIA.

(c) Neither bill makes an exception for Government agencies, universities, and similar organizations with legitimate research objectives. It is believed that the passage of either bill would reduce CIA's ability to study Communist propaganda and analyze other information from the Soviet orbit.


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(d) Although it is not known what steps the Postmaster General would take to comply, it is doubtful that judgment would be exercised in assessing individual pieces of mail. It is believed more likely that sweeping prohibitions, automatically applied, would make the practical effect of these bills more restrictive than the bills themselves intend. This is particularly true since much of the mailed material would be in a foreign language.

(e) Presumably it would be the responsibility of the Postmaster General's legal staff to determine whether these bills are consistent with the international postal conventions. If the bills are found to apply only to mail originating within the US, as is implied in Section 3 of H.R. 9244, the restrictive effect will be somewhat lessened.

2. This Division recommends that CIA oppose passage of both bills.

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